

AGRICULTURE: NEGLECTED IN PLANNING?

David Harrison and Michael Noonan
Department of Urban and Regional Planning
Ryerson Polytechnical Institute
Toronto, Ontario

OCCASIONAL PAPER NO. 1
March 1980

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AGRICULTURE: NEGLECTED IN PLANNING?

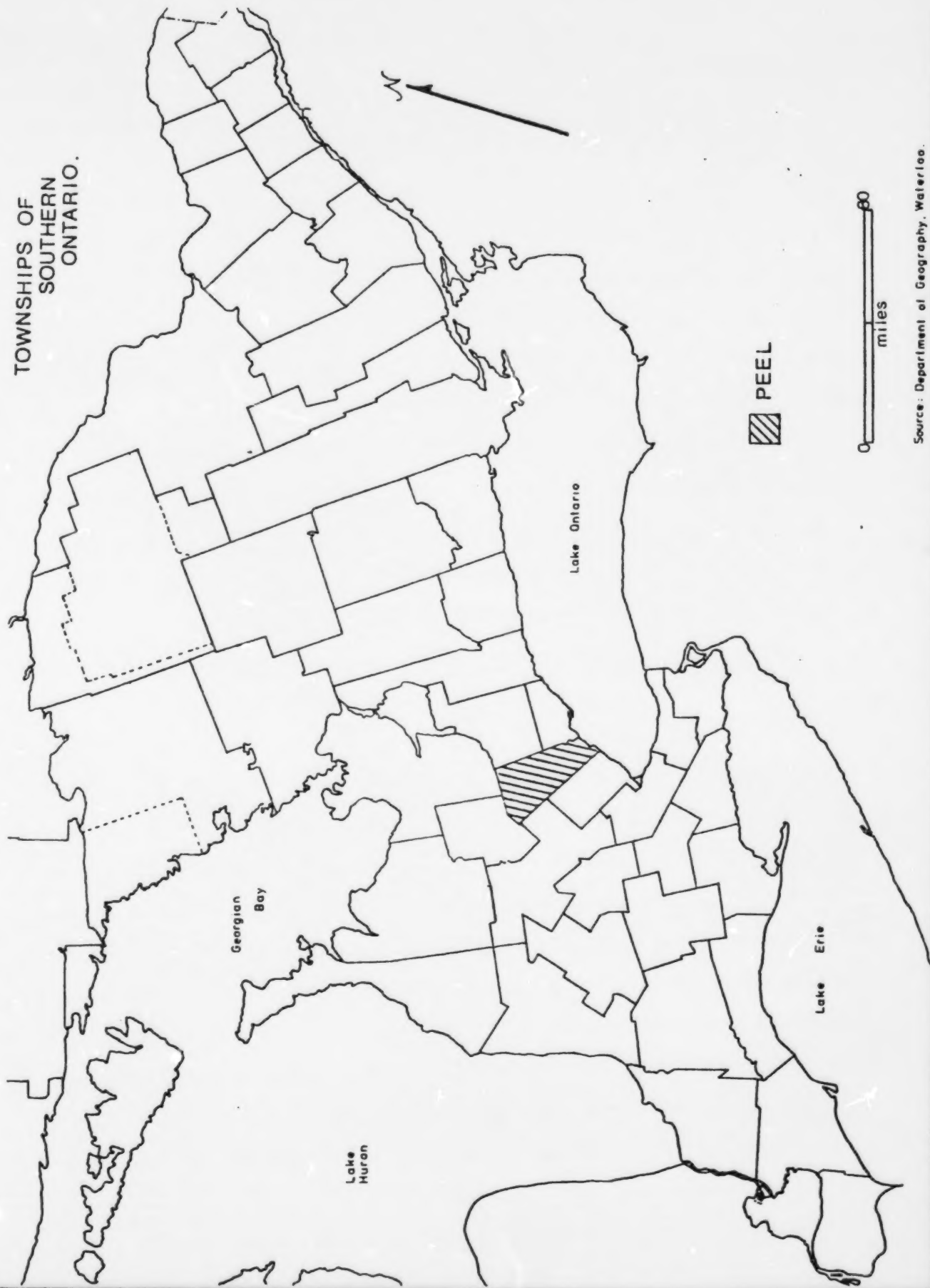
A. INTRODUCTION

During the summer of 1979, the authors researched the dynamics of urban expansion within the rural-urban fringe. The intent of this examination was to outline the potential implications that suburban growth has on the Ontario agricultural resource base. The report that resulted was produced in conjunction with the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute and the Association of Peel People Evaluating Agricultural Land (A.P.P.E.A.L.), a community group within the Region of Peel which is dedicated to the preservation of farmland.

The report employed as a case study a 13,000 acre tract of land in northern Mississauga (known as the 'Hole in the Doughnut') which is destined for residential and industrial development. A position may be taken that this particular case example is insignificant for commercial agricultural production in Ontario. In response to this, however, it should be realized that the problems and issues associated with the loss of prime agricultural land in this location are not unique and are comparable to other areas in the Province and throughout Canada.

The thoughts that are enumerated here are important as future planning perspectives and for the future viability of the agricultural industry. Considerations that merit attention include the desirability of retaining farmland as a basis for an alternate lifestyle, the future supply of the agricultural resource base, Canada's declining self-sufficiency in food production, and increasing reliance on imported foodstuffs. These must be examined in conjunction with a growing urban population, rising food prices, energy constraints, and the declining proportion of the Gross National Product which is attributable to commercial agricultural production.

TOWNSHIPS OF
SOUTHERN
ONTARIO.



PEEL

0 80
miles

Source: Department of Geography, Waterloo.

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to question the degree of management and protection presently afforded Ontario's best farmland.

B. AN ANALYSIS OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES CONCERNING AGRICULTURAL LAND

The loss of agricultural land in Canada is an issue that is complicated by many economic, social and political phenomena. There is a basic lack of data on agricultural needs and on the needs of the development industry in the country. This has created a climate where the preservation of agricultural land is treated differently between provinces, since each provincial government maintains a different perspective on the severity of the problem. Nonetheless, it has also become difficult to avoid a romanticization of the rural-urban conflict. An increasing number of community groups are developing views on the issue, and consequently it has become difficult to determine what exactly constitutes a farm or an agricultural endeavour. Hobby farming, for example, is generally thought of as an urban use of farmland.

The land market operates relatively freely in fringe areas and has created a problem that can now be defined in both micro and macro economic contexts. For example, when a farmer sells his farm and realizes a profit, he is (usually) able to relocate, upgrade his operation, increase his agricultural output, or retire. While having micro economic benefits, the aggregation of this activity in conjunction with uncertain energy supplies, may be affecting levels of food importation, food prices, the degree of food self-sufficiency in those areas where it might be expected to be highest, and value of production to the Gross National Product. In addition to these land market forces, the loss of agricultural land may be also affected by the economic conditions within the farming community itself, such as fluctuating wages and profits, and other factors such as climate. While this may predispose a favourable attitude

concerning an uncontrolled functioning of the land market in rural areas, it will become increasingly difficult to apply a simple economic generalization to an issue that could be of important future consequence.

Of course, the agricultural land base has also been affected by observed urban phenomena, such as the demand for rural severances, suburban and industrial demands for space, urban politics and competition between municipalities, greater demands for recreational space, rising land values, the expansion of municipal boundaries, the development of utility and transportation corridors, and part-time and hobby farming. The manner in which government policies deal with agricultural land and these other pertinent issues are investigated in the following sections.

C. POLICY PERSPECTIVES

1. The Federal Level

The relationship between urban centres and the quality of their surrounding land resource is important at the national level. It is not surprising that there should be a close affinity between agriculture and urban settlement given Canada's history, but that the relationship is so strong in a country widely supposed to have vast resources for agriculture is of considerable importance.¹

In Canada, most agricultural production takes place in the fringe surrounding Canadian cities. In 1971, 46.8 per cent of the total value added by agriculture to Canada's Gross National Product was derived from production on land that lies within 50 miles of Canada's twenty-two Census Metropolitan Areas* (CMA's).²

* A Census Metropolitan Area = 100,000 people or more.

The conflict is more than apparent given the capability of these fringe areas for agricultural production and their relative importance to the national urban network. Approximately 53 per cent of Canada's Class 1 agricultural land (the best for crop production) is located within 50 miles of Canada's twenty-two Census Metropolitan Areas.³ It must also be noted that as of 1975, fifty per cent of the nation's population resided in areas which included the best five per cent of farmland, while at least three-quarters of the past decade's urban growth occurred on this prime agricultural land.⁴ It would not be unreasonable to conclude that non-agricultural uses around these CMA's are eroding the country's agricultural resource base. Considering that urban pressures extend so far into the countryside, several probable future scenarios have been drawn by Environment Canada which indicate that most of Canada's farmland will be required to serve domestic food needs within 50 years. In fact, based on these projections, it is apparent that a supply/demand problem for high quality farmland will exist within 50 years.⁵

Land adjacent to Canadian cities constitute zones where many land use conflicts now occur and where the economic benefits generated by agricultural production on these lands are in jeopardy. Canadian exports of all agricultural products in 1978 amounted to \$6 billion whereas imports of these products amounted to \$4.1 billion. Yet the compounded annual rates of growth of exports and imports from 1966 to 1978 were 9 per cent and 13.3 per cent respectively. If these growth rates remain constant, Canada could be importing more food than it exports within a decade and will face a very possible food deficit situation.⁶ The urban demands for land in fringe areas could add significantly to this problem.

Although no national land use policy currently exists to delineate or protect agricultural land, policies could be developed since land in Canada is held at the pleasure of the Crown. While the British North America Act places resources and land use control under the jurisdiction of the provinces, the fact that "Parliament may from time to time make laws in relationship to agriculture" leaves room for some interpretation as to where the responsibility lies for maintaining agricultural use of land in Canada.⁷

Since many aspects of agriculture and land use control are provincial responsibilities however, it is interesting that provinces have perceived this issue differently and therefore have reacted in different ways.

2. The Provincial Level : Ontario

Most of Canada's prime agricultural land is in areas of Southern Ontario where agriculture is in competition with urban land uses. At least half of the country's Class 1 farmland is located in Southern Ontario, and when classified by its proximity to city cores, the real conflict between agricultural land and the need to accommodate urban growth becomes apparent. It has been well documented that the land within 75 miles of each of the centres of Toronto, Hamilton, St. Catharines-Niagara, Kitchener-Waterloo, London, and Windsor encompasses 70 per cent or more of Classes 1, 2, and 3 agricultural land to be found in the entire province.⁸ It would be reasonable to predict that these lands will continue to be threatened by urban expansion for some time. It is not apparent that demands for residential and industrial space on the periphery of metropolitan areas is diminishing. The continual erosion of the tender fruit resource base in the Niagara Peninsula is an indication of this phenomenon.

The rate at which farmland has been removed from production in Ontario has been the subject of much debate. The amount of improved farmland* in the province declined by 22 per cent from 1956 to 1976. Rural to urban conversion analyses made by the Lands Directorate, Environment Canada (1977, 1979) and the Bureau of Municipal Research (1977) show conclusively that urban centres will be continually expanding at the expense of the province's agricultural resource base.⁹

The loss of Ontario's best farmland will require both the utilization of poorer land which will involve higher costs, and a growing dependency upon imports to meet the food requirements of a growing population. As long as imported foods are available, this is not a problem. However, energy supply problems for the trucking industry in the United States have recently jeopardized Ontario's supply of fruit and vegetables. The relationship between Ontario's level of self-sufficiency in food production, a growing population and its demands for space, and an uncertain future with regard to energy supplies dictates that a long range view should be taken with respect to future food supplies and domestic production capabilities.

The significance of Ontario's prime agricultural land must be understood with respect to future production potential and the province's degree of self-sufficiency. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) has predicted that by 1985, the province will be able to produce only half of its requirements for potatoes, beef and fruits; three-quarters of its wheat flour and pork; and

* Improved farmland refers to any land brought into agricultural production be it for crops, fallow, and/or for pasture, including barnyards, home gardens, lanes and roadways on farms, new breaking and improved land lying idle.

four-fifths of its poultry and dairy products. Only in eggs and vegetables (Figure 1, Table 1) does the OFA project a continuing, but steadily declining self-sufficiency.¹⁰ Security of the prime agricultural land base in Ontario will increase in importance and a movement towards, rather than away from food self-sufficiency will become desirable.

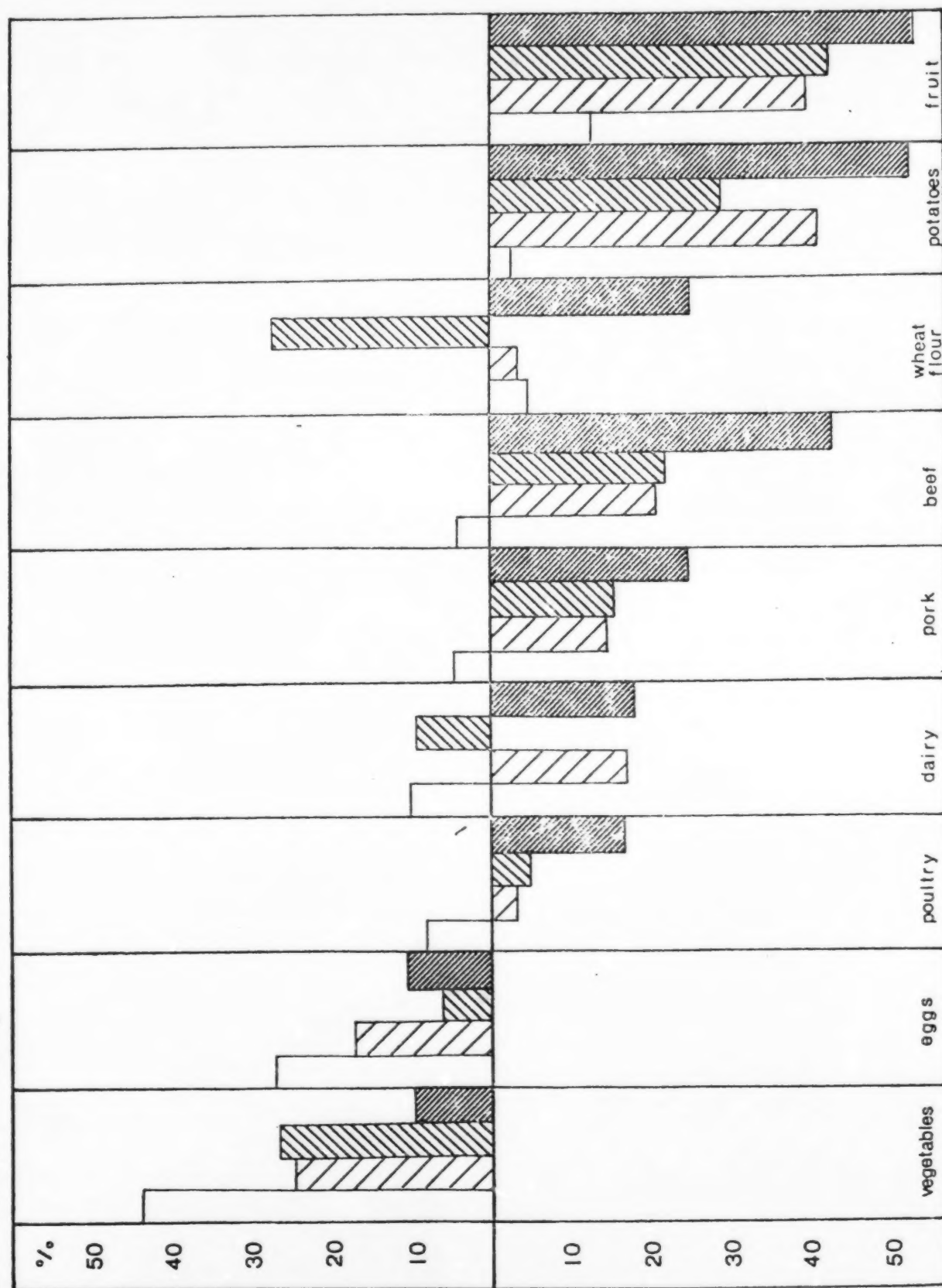
It is against this background that present planning, policies, and resource management must be evaluated on a provincial and regional basis. Agriculture should be receiving a priority in planning that is at least equivalent to that being given industry and housing but unfortunately the appropriate method for ensuring that agriculture receives a higher priority as a land use remains uncertain.

The province has attempted to increase the visibility of agricultural planning with the adoption of the Food Land Guidelines (1978). The Guidelines¹¹ state:

Our land use policies and planning must ensure that as much as possible of land with the capability is kept available for farming when it is needed. An increasing population will require production from lands with the potential for agriculture. Wherever possible, we must ensure that these lands remain available for the future.

The Food Land Guidelines have, however, come under much criticism and while the intent of this policy is worthwhile in principle, the methods for achieving its goals must be questioned.

Figure 1: Ontario's Growing Deficiency in Food Production by Commodity Area, 1978.



1961-62
1975-76
1978-79 (projected)

Source: Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Table 1 :
Ontario's Status in Food Production by Commodity Area, 1978.

percent surplus or deficit (-)

commodity area	1961-62	1973-74	1975-76	1985 (proj.)
vegetables	41.3	24.5	25.5	9.9
eggs	27.6	16.5	5.4	10.2
poultry	8.5	-2.2	-4.5	-17.0
dairy ¹	9.6	-17.1	9.3	-17.3
pork	3.4	-16.2	-16.7	-25.3
beef	3.2	-20.8	-21.4	-43.1
wheat ² flour	-4.9	-3.4	22.6	-26.1
potatoes	-3.2	-42.1	-29.7	-53.8
fruit ³	-12.0	-39.1	-42.4	-53.6

1. milk equivalents

2. wheat equivalents

3. including tomatoes

Source: Ontario Federation
of Agriculture.

The major criticism of the Food Land Guidelines is that while planning for agriculture has been delegated as a municipal or regional responsibility, the ability of local governments to effectively plan and manage farmland remains doubtful. First, it is uncertain whether or not municipalities must follow the Guidelines. Second, some critics have wondered how the many local decisions will add up in the absence of a province-wide strategy that attempts to systematically reconcile the prospective needs for land with the available resource base.¹² Without an overall policy guide, local zoning and official plans are inadequate for the task. These planning tools are oriented more towards controlling urban development and are not aimed at the preservation of agricultural land. Municipalities have traditionally treated rural land as a holding category for future development. Third, there is concern that municipal councils face social, political, and financial pressures that predispose them to look favourably on applications for severances and development of farmland. Indeed, the financial prosperity of many municipalities in Southern Ontario is predicated upon continued growth and development irrespective of the quality of lands which are consumed for urban use. Agricultural land does not produce the same tax revenue for a municipality as urban land uses such as residential, industrial or commercial, and as long as municipalities are competing with each other for industrial development and employment opportunities, their interests may not be best served by preserving farmland.¹³

The Food Land Guidelines are ineffective in other ways. There are no mechanisms or positive incentives in the Guidelines such as production subsidies or transferable development rights to ensure that urban growth will be encouraged on less productive soils. In this respect, the Food Land Guidelines have failed to come to grips with the market forces that operate without regard to the physical capabilities of the land in fringe areas.

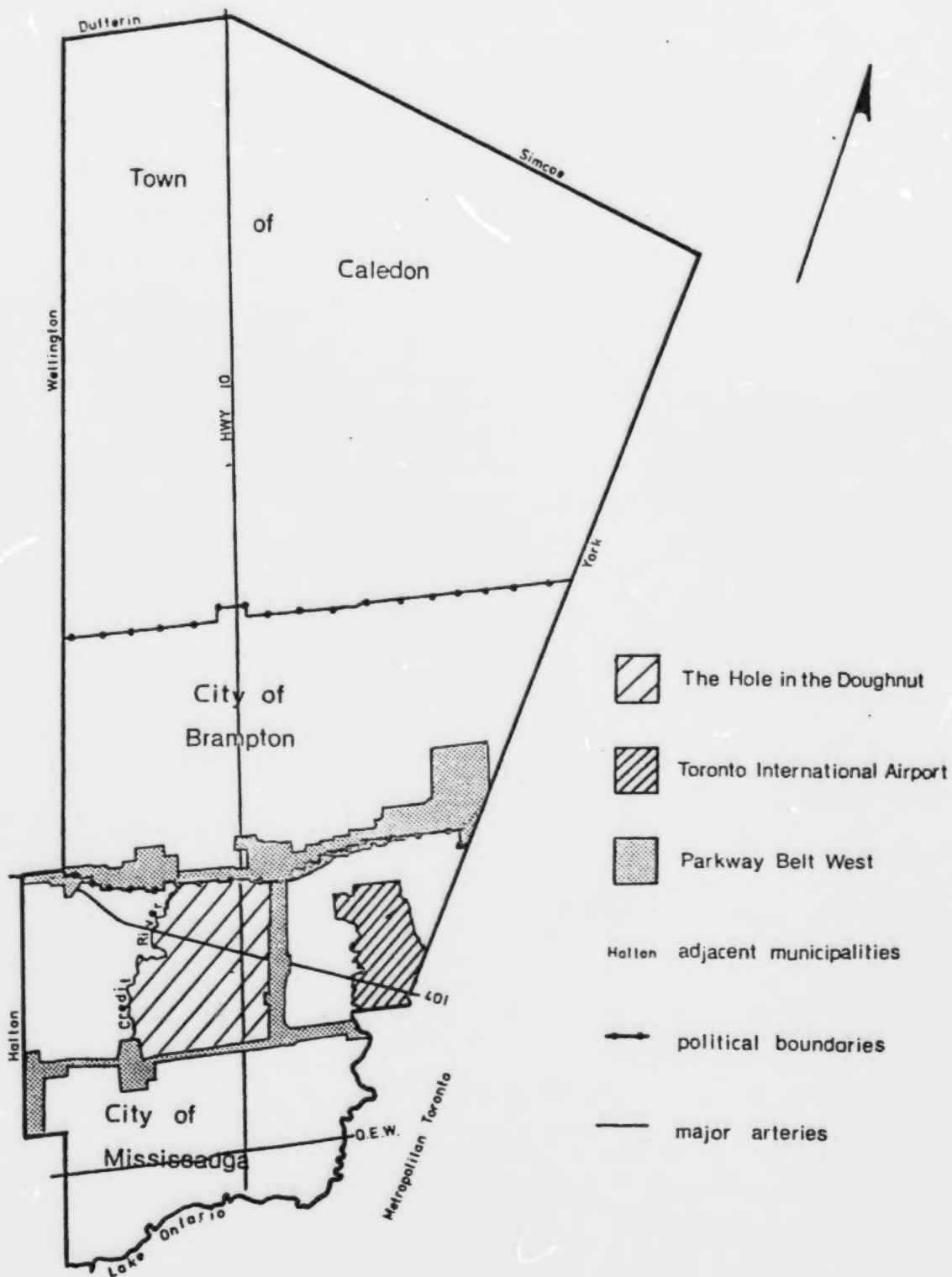
Finally, there is no commitment by the province to prepare an inventory of the best agricultural lands and which areas the province deems necessary for preservation. The Food Land Guidelines do not ensure that municipal planning decisions will reflect a priority for agriculture, nor do they show municipalities how to evaluate agriculture against other competing uses.¹⁴

Given the uncertainty of an agricultural land use policy within Ontario, there remain serious doubts about the ability of lower levels of government to plan effectively for agriculture, to protect areas worthy of preservation and to specify future agricultural requirements. In the Toronto area, the Regional Municipality of Peel and its history of urban development and loss of prime agricultural land serves as an example of such an occurrence.

3. The Regional Level : Peel

Rapid urbanization in southern Peel, particularly in the cities of Mississauga and Brampton, as well as the apparent lack of strong senior government policy related to the development of prime food land, has lead to a decline in agricultural activity. According to the region's planning department, many areas within Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon have the potential for agricultural pursuits in both the short and long term, as illustrated by present and past performances. The preservation of agricultural land within the Region can, therefore, be considered a critical issue. The growing public concern about the value of farmland was demonstrated during the public participation phase of the Region of Peel's Official Plan formulation. Of a possible fourteen future planning objectives in the Region, the importance of controlling development on prime agricultural land ranked second in Mississauga and Caledon, and third in Brampton.

Region of Peel - The Hole in the Doughnut.



The loss of farmland in the Region of Peel is not difficult to illustrate or to explain. The completion of the South Peel sewer and water scheme, in conjunction with transportation developments, resulted in a greater demand for housing and residential land allocation. This subsequently lead to rising land prices and increased land speculation which removed some parcels of land from production, thereby making it difficult to maintain the agricultural resource base.

The operation of a farm in Peel as a viable unit is increasingly difficult given the trend toward suburbanization. The movement of farm machinery, for example, is affected by greater volumes of traffic and by land severances. Typically, the farmer must deal with neighbours who demand an increased level of services, yet who complain about farm noise or odours.

Agricultural production and other land uses in the rural-urban fringe are therefore seen as having incompatible aspects which lead to declines in the amount of land involved in food production.

It is obvious that agriculture is in a state of decline in the Region. Census Canada data (Table 2) illustrates that the total area occupied by farms in the Region decreased by 29 per cent or nearly 55,000 acres from 1961 to 1971.¹⁵

From 1971 to 1976 the amount of improved farmland decreased by 100,844 acres and unimproved farmland decreased by 7,237 acres.¹⁶ It must be noted, however, that the definition of a farm for census purposes had changed in 1961 and again 1976. The definition has generally become more restrictive and differences in data may be attributed to these changes.¹⁷

Table 2: Farm Area Statistics by Tenure, Peel, 1961 - 1976

	1961	1966	1971	1976
Total Area of Peel (Acres)	300,160		320,170	302,720
Total Area of All Farms	207,932	201,618	163,588	148,049
Farm Area as Per cent of Total Area	69.3	67.2	54.5	48.9
Area Owned	105,874	81,968	55,530	36,461
Area Rented	19,704	19,670	28,063	28,243
Area Part owned, Part Rented	72,700	88,654	79,995	83,345
Area Managed	8,654	11,326	-	-
Total Area Owned	156,867	142,966	95,452	75,045
Total Area Owned as per cent of Total Area	52.3	47.6	31.8	25.2
Total Area Owned as a per cent of Total Farm Area	75.4	71.0	58.4	51.4
Total Area Rented	51,065	58,652	68,136	72,004
Total Area Rented as a per cent of Total Area	17.0	19.5	22.7	23.8
Total Area Rented as a per cent of Total Farm Area	24.6	29.1	41.7	48.6

SOURCE: CENSUS OF CANADA, 1961-1976

The decline in the agricultural industry can also be substantiated. During the period from 1961 to 1976, the number of farm operators declined 45.4 per cent. In 1951, agriculture employed 16.1% of Peel's labour force, but by 1971 it employed only 1.9% per cent of the labour force. Between 1961 to 1976, the total acreage owned by farmers decreased by 65.9 per cent; and between 1961 and 1976 the number of farms with sales of \$2,500 or more declined by 38.5 per cent.¹⁸

This decline can be contrasted to the Region's capability for agriculture (Table 3). It is evident from this table that Peel has the physical capability for agricultural production. Of the total land area, 73.2 per cent of the land is classified as prime agricultural land (Classes 1, 2, 3).

The Regional Municipality of Peel has recognized the value of agricultural production¹⁹ with the following statement;

.....many areas within Peel have the potential for agricultural pursuits in both the short and long term. In evaluation of Peel's agricultural resource, it is also rational to assume that agricultural production must keep pace with the urbanization within the Toronto-based Region and that foreign suppliers of food should not be relied upon heavily in the future. Thus there is a need for a certain degree of agricultural production within the Region of Peel.

The Regional goal with respect to agriculture,²⁰ which was adopted in the Region's Strategy for Agriculture: Preliminary Report on Goals and Objectives (1978) is:

The retention of an economically healthy, increasingly productive and environmentally sound agricultural industry within the Region of Peel.

Table 3: Area of Improved and Unimproved Farmland, Peel
(on farms with \$50 or more in agricultural sales)

IMPROVED LAND (acres)	1971	1976
under crop	194,618	102,473
improved pasture	28,113	20,554
summer fallow	3,938	2,973
other	4,855	4,680
TOTAL	231,524	130,680
UNIMPROVED LAND (acres)		
woodland	8,646	7,782
other	23,418	17,045
TOTAL	32,064	24,827

SOURCE: Agricultural Statistics for Ontario (1971, 1976),
Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

To achieve this goal, some sixteen objectives are outlined within the Regional strategy for agriculture.²¹ Four important objectives include:

- a) To outline the agricultural resource base within the Peel planning area in accordance with the Food Land Guidelines.
- b) To ensure that an adequate proportion of Peel's agricultural resource base is protected to allow for the maintenance and intensification of the agricultural industry.
- c) To ensure that development occurs within a growth management context, which minimizes impacts on Peel's agricultural base.
- d) To ensure the future growth is justified in the context of Peel's contribution to long term agricultural requirements.

Whether or not these objectives will be pursued through specific actions and proposals remains to be seen. Regional powers with respect to agriculture are limited and, while the Region can encourage and endorse, it can seldom specify requirements for agriculture. The Province has designated responsibility for agriculture to the lower levels of government through the Food Land Guidelines, but the Region has little authority (i.e. legislative powers) over its agricultural resource base.

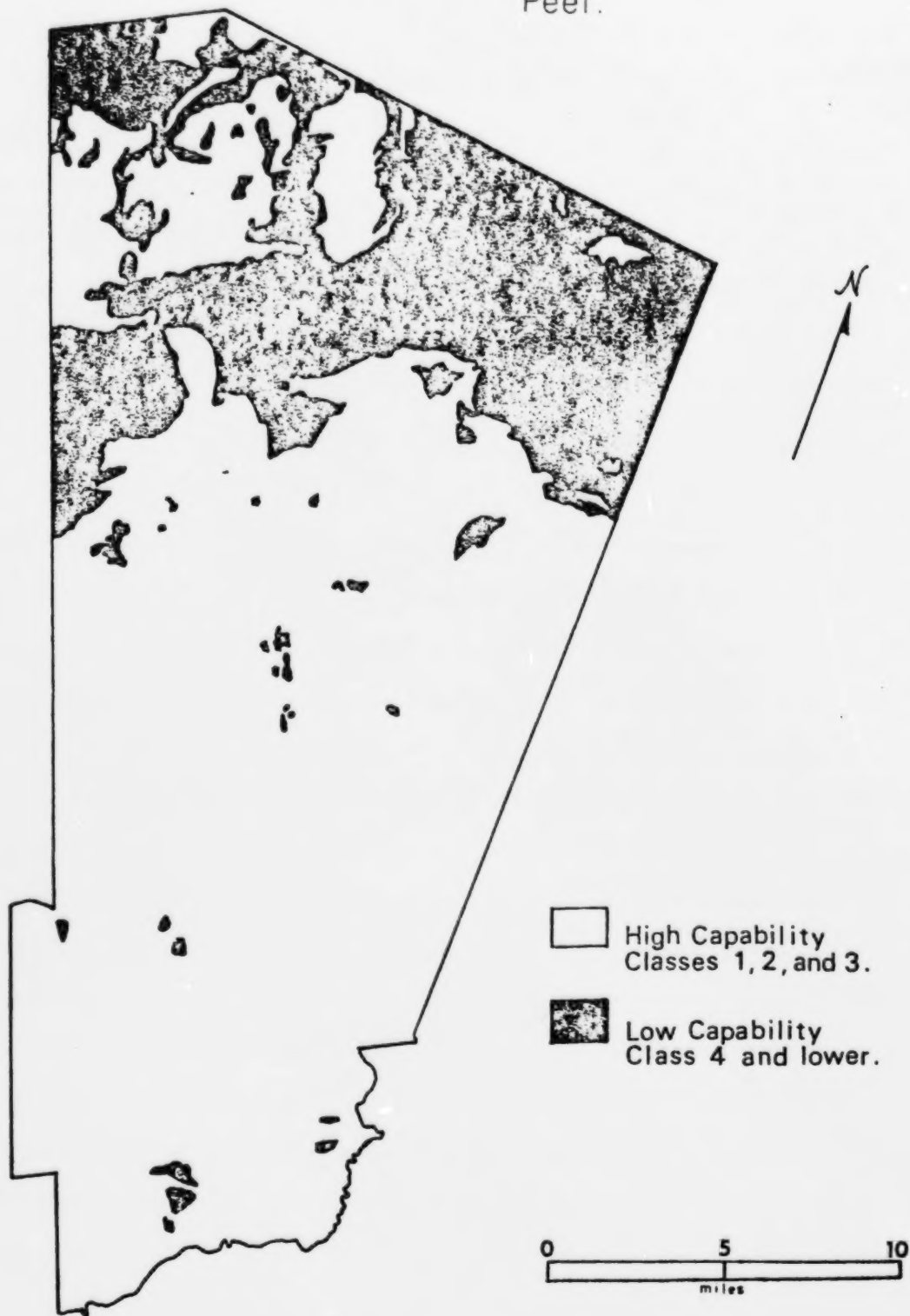
This immediately raises the question about the Region's abilities to plan effectively for agriculture. How will the Region define "an adequate proportion" of its agricultural base to be protected (objective b)? Given the Food Land Guidelines, which represent good policy but with uncertain implemental measures, would a delineation of Peel's agricultural resource base be an adequate protective measure or merely a mapping exercise?

Ensuring that development occurs within a growth management context is something that the Region may pursue, but difficulties arise with the interpretation of growth management at the lower level of government. In Mississauga a phasing policy whereby growth would be directed and managed was recently deleted from the city's official plan. Growth management implies development control. Is agriculture, or agricultural productivity, a requisite for development control? It would appear not. The Official Plan for the Region of Peel designates Caledon as a predominantly rural municipality, but when the Region's capability for agriculture is examined (Figure 2) it can be seen that Caledon encompasses the majority of the Region's poorest soils!

The regional government, because of powers granted by the Province, can take a stand on issues that a municipality will rarely consider, such as agriculture. Yet, the Regional Official Plan will be only a consolidation of its member municipalities' plans. In this respect, the Region will rarely go against its member municipalities' decisions. Since development control, approval powers, municipal zoning by-laws and official plans are the only tools that the Region has at its disposal, its position on agriculture must rest between a weak provincial policy and the varied decisions of its constituent municipalities.

Concerning development control, the Region may oppose developments not conforming with the individual municipal or regional official plans. It may also oppose development if it is not economically feasible, or until other conditions are met. Rarely would a development be disallowed because it is being placed on prime agricultural land. It should be remembered that maintenance of intra-municipal harmony is also desired by the Regional government!

Figure 2: Soil Capability for Agriculture:
Peel.



Source - Planning Peel, 1976.

A local planning department may make a recommendation to Regional council, yet the structure of Regional council and political commitments of councillors will also alter the Region's power over agriculture, land use, and the effectiveness of its policies. It appears then that the Region's powers are limited and are restricted to the decision made in official plans at the municipal level. Further, this paper concludes that the Regional Municipality of Peel will not be effective in ensuring that agricultural land use will remain either in the short term or, even more importantly, in the long term.

4. The Municipal Level: Mississauga

Traditional farming activity has been pushed out of Mississauga. A culmination of private and public decisions have made large scale agricultural endeavours impractical in the city, since many of the farm support services, such as farm implement dealers and feed mills, have been forced to relocate in areas where there is less rural/urban conflict. An increase in traffic congestion in Mississauga during the past ten years has made the movement of farm machinery more difficult and hazardous, while land prices have been inflated in anticipation of residential and industrial development. These developments have made the existence of traditional agricultural practices virtually impractical. At the same time a more public-oriented agricultural industry has been developing in Mississauga including small scale farming, market gardening, garden centres, allotment gardens, kennels and riding stables. These public-oriented agricultural activities however, may also be in jeopardy since the structural capabilities and motivations within local government do not exist to ensure the future viability of these land uses.

As indicated earlier, the province has delegated responsibility for the preservation of the agricultural resource base to the regional and municipal levels of government. This responsibility is outlined under the Food Land Guidelines, which establishes criteria for evaluating agriculture and alternative land uses. Interesting contradictions emerge within the realm of local planning, since the Food Land Guidelines are only guidelines and their impact on planning procedures remain negligible in some instances. For example, the Region of Peel has indicated²² that:

Although many areas within Peel have been destined for future development, there are, however, many areas within Mississauga...(that) exhibit both short and long term potential for agricultural production.

On the other hand, the Region has also indicated that while most of the undeveloped land in Mississauga is prime agricultural land, the pressures on the agricultural industry and costs associated with maintaining a viable agricultural economy are prohibitive.

These contradictions inevitably emerge in areas that are experiencing urban growth. By stating that the maintenance of an agricultural economy is not viable within Mississauga, the Region relies on traditional urban economic theory while failing to acknowledge the change towards a more public-oriented agricultural industry. This change may indeed be a desirable one which is deserving of local support. In fact, traditional land use theory may be most inappropriate when making comparisons and decisions for land uses where agricultural land is involved. In any market analysis that determines "best land use", the physical value of the resource and its future production potential are not included. This argument can be further developed with specific reference to Mississauga.

With the development of Mississauga's Official Plan, it is evident that traditional economic theory prevailed as the determinant in the City's assessment of agriculture. The Official Plan Task Force took the following perspective²³ with respect to agricultural preservation and its role in the City's future:

Mississauga is faced with the issue of whether or not to preserve agricultural land, but the preservation of agricultural land is a National and Provincial issue. We cannot relate Mississauga's priorities to the broader Provincial priorities concerning agricultural land. In the absence of (a firm) Provincial policy on this matter, it must be assumed that the price of land for urban and agricultural uses reflects the values of society concerning the allocation of land for various uses. Encouraging production from agricultural land in the period before it is urbanized does not conflict with city priorities and should be pursued. (emphasis added)

The price of undeveloped, prime agricultural land in Mississauga represents only the values and aspirations of specific interest groups rather than 'society' as a whole. It must be noted that the majority of concern for the preservation of agricultural land in Peel emanates mainly from Mississauga, where rapid changes in community have been perceived and where the confrontation between agriculture and urban land use is more highly visible to the public.

In lieu of a local agricultural strategy, it can be assumed that industrial and even residential land use is much more valuable to the city. Accommodations can only be made for agriculture as an interim use. It is the future of public-oriented agricultural uses of land in the city that is therefore in jeopardy. Since large scale agricultural operations are becoming increasingly difficult to maintain and since the city has the land resource within its border, it appears that agriculture has been neglected: certainly no alternatives have been explored beyond interim land use designations.

Mississauga's Planning Department has maintained that farming in the city is dead and that this situation existed long before the city drafted its Official Plan in 1976. This attitude appeared well-established and therefore aided in the preclusion of the Official Plan as a policy instrument whereby land may be reserved for future private or public agricultural pursuits. Reasons most often cited for supporting this attitude are that the land is serviceable and should be developed, that the land is not generally owned by farmers, and that the price of land has risen so dramatically in response to the operation of the market that agriculture is not the best use. These arguments are often made concerning agricultural land near urban settings. If considered in the larger context of land use, it is a wonder that any policies for maintaining recreation lands, hazard lands or conservation areas have been created. Agriculture sits at the bottom of the land use totem pole, which explains its designation as an interim land use with no permanent policy in Mississauga.

In Mississauga's Official Plan there are no agricultural areas, but of special interest are the areas referred to as 'Non-urban' and 'Special Policy' (Figure 3). These areas are presently zoned for agricultural uses, but contradictions exist between the proposed permitted uses and policy statements. A 'Non-urban' area, for example, is to contain uses that will be "consistent with maintaining the area open and free from extensive number of buildings and structures."²⁴ Permitted uses²⁵ may include:

- . residential estate lot development,
- . agricultural uses,
- . public open space, recreation and conservation,
and
- . private open space and open air recreational activities
which may include golf courses, golf driving ranges, riding
academies and similar uses.

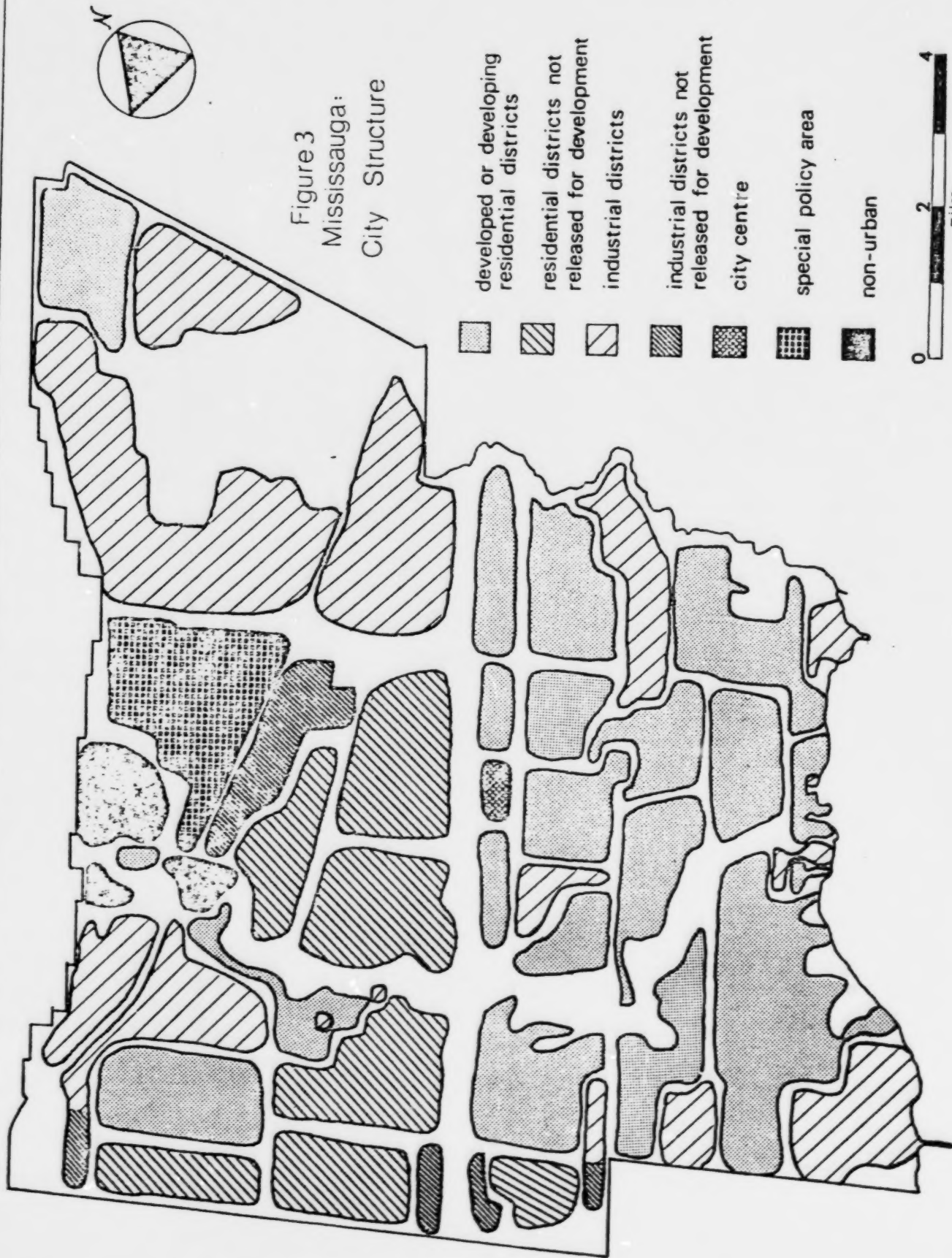


Figure 3
Mississauga:
City Structure

One conflict is that residential estate lot development may not coincide with the desire to maintain open areas which remain free from extensive development. The main conflict, however, arises between residential estate lot development and agricultural uses. Accordingly, "residential estate lot developments shall locate in areas of limited agricultural potential or where it (sic) will not hamper agricultural activity."²⁶ The fact that all land in the 'Non-urban' areas has been classified by the Canada Land Inventory as either Class 1 or Class 3 farmland makes this an absurd policy statement. In addition residential estate lot development has a tendency to fragment land holdings which makes any operation of agricultural activity more difficult. This policy appears to discourage non-agricultural uses but at the same time does not necessarily prevent such uses or enhance agricultural use.

Permitted uses in the 'Special Policy' area²⁷ may include:

- . public open space, recreation and conservation,
- . private open space and open air activities, and
- . agricultural uses.

A motion tabled in Mississauga Council in December 1977 indicated that although the "Special Policy" area is designated as either open space or agricultural land, the ultimate use would be residential and/or industrial. The Official Plan states that "uses which are incompatible with agricultural uses will not be permitted."²⁸ Concerning the 'Special Policy' area, this motion²⁹ stated:

That these decisions would be reconsidered from time to time to determine whether all or part should be designated industrial or residential and that such consideration take into account....the current requirements for agricultural land.

Since agriculture has been deemed an interim land use, and since no agricultural areas have been designated in the Official Plan, it is debatable whether the city's prime farmlands have been given as much consideration in the plan as they should have. Finally, the determination of current requirements for agricultural land is not now and never has been a priority within the city. It remains unlikely, therefore, that residential and industrial uses in this area will ever be evaluated against agricultural requirements.

Mississauga's Official Plan does, however, recognize the aesthetic importance of agricultural areas to the city and states that severances and newly created parcels of land should "not be granted to encourage uses which destroy or appreciably reduce the scenic quality of attractive agricultural areas."³⁰ This conflicts with the approved 'Non-urban' uses which include residential estate lot development. The City's desire to maintain the scenic qualities of farmland is not followed through with policies and land use designations for agriculture in the Official Plan. Farming and public garden allotments are being permitted in these areas until future development occurs, at which time these interim land uses will cease to exist.

It is becoming evident that farmland in and around an urban area offers great value to residents as greenbelt, and Mississauga may be³¹ precluding this opportunity:

Research has indicated that strategically located areas, agricultural areas, agricultural lands and woodlands in an urban setting not only provides open space, with all its aesthetic values, but also provides a psychological uplift and ecological balance. Furthermore, by keeping open large land areas, normal development can occur in a less sprawling pattern and reduce, to some extent, costs such as utilities, school costs and other soft services, roads and other transportation facilities.

Development on prime agricultural land should be given more consideration by the City since preservation is a municipal responsibility. As the issue of agricultural land in Mississauga is considered in the context of provincial and regional rural urban land conversion rates, rising food prices, increasing population pressures and greater transportation costs due to uncertain energy supplies, the desirability for maintaining a greater degree of self-sufficiency in localized food production becomes obvious.

D. CONCLUSION

There is a popular misconception that Canada has an abundance of agricultural land. While constituting only .45 per cent of the nation's total land area, Class 1 farmland, because it is located close to the country's major urban centres, is under increasing competition from other land uses. The majority of agricultural production in Canada is derived from these lands, and their importance becomes even more evident when it is considered that food imports are growing more rapidly than food exports which signifies a decline in national food self-sufficiency.

Ontario's role in the national picture is very important. While the province contains a large portion of the nation's Class 1 farmland, it is also facing a decline in its food self-sufficiency.

Ontario's Food Land Guidelines place the responsibility for agricultural land preservation squarely on the shoulders of its municipalities. Based on the examples of Mississauga and the Region of Peel, planning for agriculture remains a low priority which points to the deficiencies in provincial policy.

Municipalities' interests may not best be served by preserving agricultural land, since they are predisposed to look favourably upon urban development as a means of strengthening their tax bases. Local planning tools have been devised for controlling residential and industrial development, but planning for agriculture remains relatively primitive in comparison.

This paper concludes that Ontario's Food Land Guidelines are inadequate as a planning tool in dealing with this complex question. A myriad of local decisions cannot constitute a province-wide strategy. Municipalities are not committed to develop inventories of agricultural lands, let alone decide which lands should be reserved for food production. The Guidelines do not ensure that urban growth will be encouraged on less productive soils, nor do they set out criteria for the evaluation of agricultural land against other uses.

The Region of Peel is one of the fastest growing urban areas in the Metropolitan Toronto Region and agricultural production is in a serious state of decline. While the region has recognized the importance of maintaining an agricultural resource base, Peel's position lies between ineffective policy at the provincial level of government and individual decisions of its member municipalities. For this reason, the Region of Peel has very limited powers in determining requirements for agriculture.

Finally, the lack of an agricultural policy in Mississauga's Official Plan and the designation of agriculture as an interim land use indicates that the Food Land Guidelines have had little effect in this municipality's decision-making. Furthermore, interim land use designations maintain contradictory interpretations which demonstrate, at best, that the city is interested in the

aesthetic value of farmland. In time, Mississauga will develop on prime farmland as it has in the past and by continuing in this manner the city will lose a future potential for food production. In essence, there will be a replication of trends which are contributing to a problem which deserves greater attention within the realm of local planning.

FOOTNOTES

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

David Harrison and Michael Noonan are both third year students in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute in Toronto. Mr. Harrison previously received a B.A. in Geography from Trent University, and Mr. Noonan holds a B.A., also in Geography from the University of Toronto. They are both active members of A.P.P.E.A.L., and are currently employed as part-time researchers for the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

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The Editors wish to thank Doug Watanabe, a 2nd year Urban and Regional Planning student at Ryerson for the cover design and preparation.

